

**ANgyagHpak: One language, One land, One team, One youth!**



### **Learning and Teaching Siberian Yupik Language and Customs through Shared Traditional Activities in Alaska and Chukotka**

#### **Abstract:**

This project is titled “Angyaghpak” in Siberian Yupik, “Kovcheg” in Russian, and “The Ark” in English. This name symbolizes the main goal of the proposed project, which is to simultaneously learn, teach, and protect the Siberian Yupik language through various ethnic activities like dancing, handicrafts and Arctic sports. In reference to the biblical Ark of Noah, the project aims to gather and preserve Siberian Yupik cultural elements and pass them to the future generations of native people, especially youth, in Saint Lawrence Island, Alaska and Chukchi Peninsula, Chukotka. During the inaugural Youth Forum at Beringia Days 2011 in Nome, Alaska, youth from the Beringia region in both countries met and developed a set of project recommendations to make this proposal a reality. The traditions are part of the shared cultural heritage of the Siberian Yupik people who inhabit the coastal communities of the Bering Strait in America and Russia, and represent the common “language” that they speak. The Siberian Yupik people from both sides are one ethnic group that shares the same languages and traditions. They have family ties that connect them on a deep and meaningful level. They are literally “one family” and therefore should work together to preserve and teach these traditions for future generations. The historical and political divisions that separated Yupik people in America and Russia could not suppress these ancient customs and they continue to provide a cultural “bridge” between the indigenous people in both countries. In the face of technology and rapid developments, however, the traditions that sustain this bridge are in danger of extinction. Both groups of youth recognize the inherent threat to their customs and are dedicated to maintaining its continuity through dancing, singing, doing handicrafts and participating in Arctic sports.

**The main components of the “Angyaghpak” project, as suggested by the participants, are:**

- Using cultural exchanges and meetings to record and pass on the shared heritage of their ancestors through participation in native activities like dance, song, handicrafts and sports.

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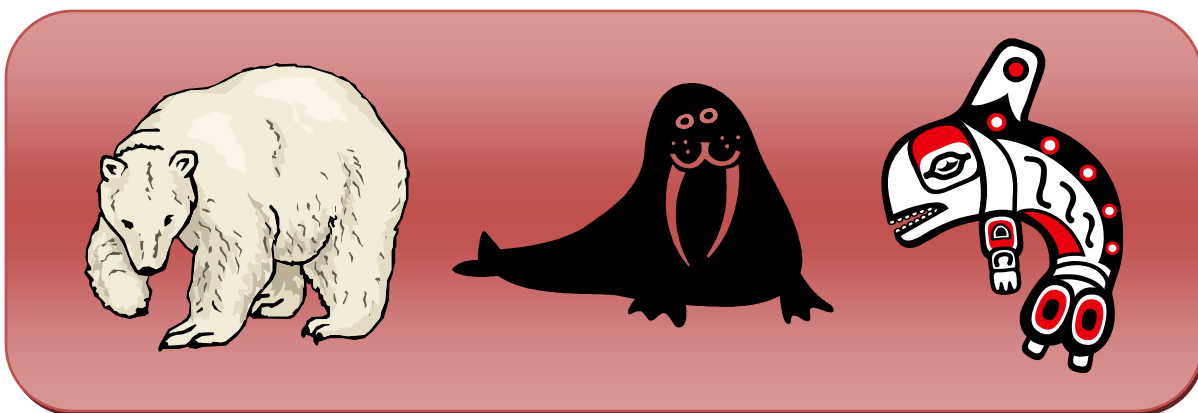
- Participants in this project will write down all the songs that accompany dances in Siberian Yupik and translate them into English and Russian. The words will be written phonetically, thus they can be pronounced, understood, and repeated by everyone. Both sides will work on recording these songs and dances on voice recorders and HD video, with the ultimate goal of teaching Siberian Yupik to fellow indigenous youth through active participation. The same process will be used to record participation in the other activities.
- The songs, dances, crafts and sports will be photographed, step-by-step and word-by-word, with the end product being an instructional video or picture series that will simultaneously record and preserve the activities, and will help others to understand Siberian Yupik words through active participation in dance, song, handicrafts and sports.
- A further goal will be to have exchanges of young teachers of Siberian Yupik who will dance, do handicrafts, and practice Arctic sports with their students as a means of teaching the language. The young people and teachers involved will participate in exchanges with the understanding that at their meetings, only Siberian Yupik will be spoken. There will be no Russian or English involved—the main purpose will be to create the necessary medium for language learning. Regardless of skill or fluency, Siberian Yupik will be the only language spoken. To communicate, the young people will have to search out and learn words they may not have known. The people from the local community can also be involved in the process of immersing students and teachers in the language and will be invited to participate in the process of recording Yupik activities
- The youth and community participants involved in the project will designate young teachers who will develop and implement a curriculum that can be taught in both Alaska and Chukotka. This curriculum will be developed and standardized so that even beginners in the communities can learn the language and traditions of their ancestors. The teachers could involve or consult with a specialist in language curriculum development to help them with the design of the Siberian Yupik curriculum.
- The result of this project “Angyaghpak” and further curriculum will be a common knowledge of the same words, dances, songs, crafts, and sports in Siberian Yupik communities in Alaska and Chukotka. This shared knowledge, where both sides know the same things in the same language, will be demonstrated by performances at native dance festivals around the region – “Ergav” in Chukotka and “Kivgiq” in Alaska. Youth that participate and learn through this curriculum will have the opportunity to attend these meetings and festivals, where they will represent one cultural and ethnic group. They will perform the same dances and songs in the same language as one crew, “Angyaghpak.” While they may come to the festivals and meetings from different villages in different countries, they will unite as one group who sing and dance a common language, Siberian Yupik. They will also participate in the Beringia Days Conference, providing a living example of collaboration and cooperation in the region.

The budget for this project will include funding for exchanges, back and forth once each funding year, where youth and the designated teachers and recorders will travel to Siberian Yupik-speaking villages in Alaska and Chukotka. Other funding will provide salary or contract money for a consultant and teachers to accompany the youth on the exchanges and develop a curriculum around Siberian Yupik traditional activities that the youth engage in. Funding will also be provided for equipment needed to record performances or participation in shared activities during and after the exchanges so that material can continue to be added to the curriculum. Farther down the line, the project would fund travel for both Alaskan and Russian youth to travel and meet at native dance festivals across the Beringia region. Funding for costumes and other materials will be provided, so when the youth perform as one group, they look like one group. A logo and promotional materials for “Angyaghpak” will be developed for distribution,

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so that the project is well-known and recognizable in local communities. After the curriculum is developed, funding for publication, dissemination, and implementation will be provided. The shared activities will become part of the modern-day education of Siberian Yupik youth in both Alaska and Chukotka, thereby saving, preserving, and passing on the customs of their ancestors.





### ***Effects of Climate Change on Hunting Calendars***

This project idea would reflect and demonstrate the real effects of climate change and the personal experiences of youth in Beringia communities. This proposal and idea focuses on how climate change has affected rural communities who rely on a subsistence lifestyle to survive and thrive. Climate change is evident on a personal level and on a community level. People from different communities, backgrounds, lifestyles, cultures and traditions recognize and share the detrimental effects of a warming climate. This project aims to advance knowledge, communication and safety for subsistence hunters who personally experience the effects of climate change in the region, both in Alaska and Russia.

Climate change is not an abstract concept, but a real and noticeable process. It affects ice sheets, hunting grounds, animal habitats and hunting schedules. It is evident in native Alaskan and Chukotkan villages that seasonal weather changes, such as ice sheets not freezing early enough into hunting season, are having a serious impact on the annual hunting calendars. The members of the Climate Change Youth Forum group at the 2011 Beringia Days Conference were fascinated with weather patterns attributable to climate change. They proposed documenting these changes in Alaskan and Chukotkan villages and collecting evidence of changing weather and geology, and how shifts in hunting calendars affect other areas of village life. New and unknown occurrences that change the subsistence hunting schedule modify and alter multiple things in the villages. There are safety concerns as the weather and the landscape become unpredictable and therefore untested. Early or late hunting seasons have cultural implications as a subsistence lifestyle relies on the resources of the land and sea.

This project would be called, "*Effects of Climate Change on Hunting Calendars*," and would document the changes to hunting schedules by traveling to Chukotkan and Alaskan coastal villages and conducting interviews with hunters and elders on hunting/fishing calendars to track the effects of climate change on migrations and patterns of local animals relied on for subsistence. The participants would talk to hunters of all age groups in various communities and gather information on how climate change has affected each hunting calendar for each subsistence animal (walrus, seals, caribou, birds etc.)

The main goal of this project would be to track these changes over the course of three years and provide tangible and comprehensive evidence to relevant agencies that regulate subsistence hunting. The project, depending on the evidence, would recommend to those agencies that they make the hunting

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window longer. Changes to the hunting schedule could accommodate rural communities that are being impacted by climate change.

**As a deliverable, the project participants would produce an interactive website that would be updated each year with changes to the annual Native community hunting calendars. They would include video clips of their interviews with hunters and elders from the communities as well as a virtual display of the hunting calendar. This website could be a way for Chukotkan and Alaskan hunters to provide regulatory agencies with evidence that hunting calendars are changing as a result of climate change and therefore accommodations should be made to increase the allowed subsistence hunting timeframes.**

### Health, Safety, and Awareness through Subsistence Traditions and Values



#### Why is this project important to you?:

**Andrew** "That knowledge and experiences can be passed down to younger generations for years to come."

**Henry-** "Because I hunt and preserve our culture."

**Jacob-** "teaching the youth about the health benefits of Subsistence."

This project would educate rural and urban youth (4th-8th grade) on safety, cultural preservation and healthy lifestyles through traditional subsistence resource use. This project would develop a curriculum for classroom use that would teach youth about different cultures, marine mammals, geography, food safety and the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. To develop this curriculum and the accompanying materials, the youth who are designing it will consult with and use knowledge gained from elders in their communities. The project proposes to create educational and instructive kits with video presentation(s) and pamphlets about subsistence hunting, safety, and traditional use of resources for school curriculums in both rural and urban schools. The proposal also encourages communication and sharing experiences through social media and would benefit Alaskan & Russian youth. This communication would contribute to the development of the materials by providing valuable feedback. Once the lessons and materials are implemented and distributed, sharing through social media and virtual gatherings would allow the students to interact in real-time with those who live and encourage the subsistence lifestyle. The electronic content would be supplementary to the main kit, and would offer further information for those who are interested.

The goals of this project are to educate and share information on traditional and customary subsistence resource use, allow others to experience subsistence activities, rural lifestyles and landscapes, and to share knowledge gained by consulting elders in the community. The participants would create a safety handout, an educational booklet, and an instructive DVD. The DVD would showcase and highlight local culture(s), proper hunting techniques through step-by-step demonstrations, food preparation, cultural traditions associated with subsistence hunting, and the value of a healthy subsistence lifestyle. Both elders and youth would be featured prominently in this DVD. Together, these materials would constitute a "subsistence kit" that would be made available to schools state-wide and that would become an integral part of classes focusing on Alaska Studies, Geography, Biology, Health, and Cultural Studies.



## *Community Archaeology Project*



**Abstract:** During Beringia Days 2011 in Nome, Alaska, a group of youth met to create and propose future projects benefitting the Beringia region and involving archaeology. Through brainstorming and collaboration, the students developed a project with two central goals: the first is to educate and inform youth and the community about archaeological methods and resources from both a scientific and traditional perspective. The second goal is to have students share the information and knowledge they gained through various methods. Youth, elders, and the larger community often wish to learn more about objects that were created and used by their ancestors, as well as artifacts used historically by the elders in their community. They are also interested in the methods, results, and overall subject of archaeology. Sharing this knowledge would include providing information they learned from their elders with people in the scientific community and vice-versa.

### **The main components of the project as proposed by the students:**

- **Archaeological Workshops from a Scientific Perspective**

An archeologist will travel between communities offering workshops. The workshops will include information on known sites in the specific region, current archaeological projects in area, arctic prehistory according to archaeology, and the field methods used in archeology. Workshops will be offered for one to two weeks for Elementary, Middle School, High School, and the Community. The archaeologist will be proactive and will follow through on keeping students involved. This may include working with archeologists in the area to have older students visit or even help with surveying or excavation of a site. High School students may also continue their interest in archeology through distance learning college courses.

- **Archaeological Workshops from a Traditional Perspective**

In addition to learning about objects and the stories behind the objects from a scientific perspective, students felt it is important for themselves and the community to learn from others in their community. Learning about the historic way of doing things and the way objects were used will help them to understand some of the cultural significance of archeological discoveries. The workshops will be taught by Elders and community members on a weekly or monthly basis. They

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will share how they lived and what they used to do. This may include how they used to hunt or fish for animals, teaching how to make and use tools, and what materials they used.

- **Sharing Knowledge**

Knowledge that was obtained at the scientific workshops will be shared during traditional workshops and knowledge gained at traditional workshops will be shared at the scientific workshop. This exchange will not only allow students to share what they learned but also help the scientific community gain insight into how the objects they are find in archeological studies have been used traditionally. Students will also spread the knowledge they obtain by traveling to other communities and doing presentations and through the use of the internet. Students may use video teleconferencing, create websites, and use social networking such as Facebook to continue sharing the knowledge gained in this project with a larger audience.

Students are very passionate about this project for many reasons. They want to learn about their past. They also want learn how to make and use the tools that their elders used as youth. They want to incorporate traditional knowledge with ongoing scientific research so that others have a better understanding about their culture. This project would also be an opportunity to learn about a career option that would be significant in helping them learn about and share their culture.